

How climate fight plans compare; Alarm bells are ringing about the warming world. In Canada, where it is federal election season, major political parties are trying to convince voters they have the best prescription to help in the global fight on climate change, Alex Ballingall and Ainslie Cruickshank write. Here's a description of what each is offering so far.

The Toronto Star

September 20, 2019 Friday

Copyright 2019 Toronto Star Newspapers Limited

Section: NEWS; Pg. A14

Length: 1715 words

Body

Emissions reduction pledge

30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030

How would they get there?

The way Environment Minister Catherine McKenna explains it, her party has laid the foundation for future action after four years in power with a selection of climate policies that can be made more strenuous over time.

She told the Star this week the party will roll out the next phase of its climate plan for Canada during the election campaign - possibly next week, when the United Nations holds a summit on global warming in New York and people worldwide are set to walk out of work and school to call for stronger efforts to curb emissions.

A key component of the Liberal actions so far is the federal carbon price, which kicked in this year and sets a minimum price on greenhouse gas emissions across the country - in several cases over the objections of provincial governments that argue the policy will hurt their economies and kill jobs. The current price includes a levy on fuels and a separate system for heavy industries, in which they pay for emissions above thresholds based on specific sectors averages.

The Liberals have also called for the end of coal-fired electricity generation across Canada by 2030 - with an exception for Nova Scotia, which agreed to declining cap on emissions - as they pledge to ensure the power grid is supplied with 90 per cent non-emitting energy sources before that year. The Liberals also plan to gradually require cleaner fuel and bring in regulations - delayed by three years in 2017 - to restrict methane emissions from oil and gas operations.

The Liberals also point to billions earmarked for infrastructure and public transit, as well as the creation of \$5,000 rebates to encourage people to buy zero-emission vehicles as the government aims to have all vehicle purchases in Canada be non carbon-emitting by 2040.

Does this make sense?

According to the government's own projections, current Liberal policies aren't enough to get to their emissions commitment.

How climate fight plans compare; Alarm bells are ringing about the warming world. In Canada, where it is federal election season, major political parties are tr....

Catherine Abreu, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, said the "glaring gap" is the lack of restriction on the oil and gas industry, the largest and fastest-growing source of emissions in Canada when measured by sector, according to the most recent national tally submitted to the UN.

Still, experts credit the Liberals with what they've done, even if it was more modest than some would like.

"They have a track record of putting in the real policies, the only ones that are effective," said Mark Jaccard, a professor of sustainable energy at Simon Fraser University. If they promise to crank up the stringency of what they've put in place, Jaccard said, it is "conceivable" that Canada may hit its emissions target.

Emissions reduction pledge

None.

How would they get there?

The Conservatives have not promised any specific emissions reductions, yet argue their policies would give Canada its "best chance" at achieving the Liberal government's target - first set when Stephen Harper was prime minister - of 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

The first thing a Conservative government would do is scrap the federal government's carbon price-and-rebate system, which sets a minimum price to deter greenhouse gas emissions across the country. That price rises every year until 2022, when it is expected to increase the cost of gasoline by 11 cents per litre.

The Conservatives propose alternatives they claim will be gentler on the economy and better at reducing emissions. The party would replace the carbon price with a new requirement for heavy emitters to spend unspecified amounts on green technology research and development. The Conservatives would spend \$900 million per year on tax rebates for home retrofits worth between \$1,000 and \$20,000, introduce a business tax credit for income generated from green tech that is patented in Canada, and put \$250 million into a venture capital fund for green tech companies that the Conservatives say would attract another \$1 billion in private sector funding.

The Conservatives would also scrap the Liberal government's incoming clean fuel standards - which will knock up the price of fuel on top of increases from the carbon price - in favour of new, unspecified rules to ensure fuels used in Canada become less dirty.

They also pledge to push for Canada to take credit for emissions reductions in other countries, if cleaner Canadian energy such as liquified natural gas replaces dirtier energy sources, such as coal.

Does this make sense?

Jaccard, the SFU professor, says Canadians should assume the Conservatives' measures will be weaker than current climate action because of the lack of detail in their plan. "If you're unwilling to specify the type of policy ... and if you're unwilling to specify the stringency of that, then you should not get the benefit of the doubt, because you're saying I'm going to replace these guys' policies where it is explicit," he said.

Jaccard recently published an estimate for how the Conservative climate plan would fare in the coming years, compared with the current policies in place by the government. He concluded emissions would actually go up modestly from where they are now, whereas under the current Liberal policies they are projected to drop by about 100 million tonnes by 2030.

Emissions reduction pledge

38 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030; working toward net-zero emissions by 2050

How would they get there?

How climate fight plans compare; Alarm bells are ringing about the warming world. In Canada, where it is federal election season, major political parties are tr....

The New Democrats are promising more than \$15 billion toward meeting more stringent, legislated emissions reductions targets, in line with what scientists say is required to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. A new independent Climate Accountability Office would track emissions reductions progress, according to the NDP platform.

The party says it will continue to price carbon emissions, roll back existing carbon tax breaks for major polluters, and end oil and gas subsidies. Under the NDP plan, all electricity in Canada would be "net carbon-free" by 2030 and produced by 100 per cent "non-emitting sources" by 2050.

The party says its plan would create 300,000 jobs and has promised to expand access to training and make it easier to access Employment Insurance for workers displaced by the transition. The party is also targeting transportation emissions, with promised investments in electric buses and trains.

The New Democrats say they would offer \$5,000 incentives and waive federal tax for the purchase of zero-emission vehicles. By 2040, the NDP wants all new car sales to be zero-emission vehicles. The NDP would also transition all federal vehicles to electric by 2025, including Canada Post vehicles, and aim to power all federal buildings with renewable energy by 2030.

Nationally, the party would aim to retrofit all existing housing stock with energy efficiency upgrades by 2050 and strengthen the national building code aiming for all new homes to be net zero energy ready by 2030.

Does that make sense?

Sarah Burch, the Canada research chair in sustainability governance and innovation, said the NDP plan has "good core elements," with its focus on zero-emission vehicles, job creation and building retrofits, but "vastly less" detail than the Green party's more ambitious plan.

Andrew Leach, an Alberta-based environmental economist, said the NDP plan is targeting a middle ground between the Greens and Liberals, but echoed Burch's comment that the details of how the party would achieve its targets are lacking. He questioned, for instance, whether the NDP has allocated enough funding for electric vehicle subsidies compared with the sales numbers needed to meet their goal.

"There's just a big gap between the policies they talk about and the targets," he said.

Emissions reduction pledge

60 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030; net zero by 2050

How would they get there?

The Green party would legislate its emissions target and establish a cross-party cabinet focused on achieving those reductions.

The Greens say they would not approve any new pipelines, coal, oil or gas projects. Existing oil and gas operations would continue, but production would decline, with bitumen production phased out between 2030 and 2035. The party says it would ban hydraulic fracturing and stop all oil and gas subsidies.

The Greens say they would immediately cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and redirect funding toward the renewable energy transition. A spokesperson for the party said the existing Trans Mountain pipeline would continue operating over the next decade.

The Greens say they would develop a national electrical grid strategy to reach their target of 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2030.

The Greens promise grants and zero-interest loans for energy efficiency retrofits for homes and businesses, and plan to work with provinces and territories to ensure all new construction is net zero by 2030.

How climate fight plans compare; Alarm bells are ringing about the warming world. In Canada, where it is federal election season, major political parties are tr....

On transportation, the party promised major investments in passenger rail, light rail, and electric buses working towards zero-carbon public transportation by 2040. The Greens would also exempt all zero-emissions vehicles from the federal sales tax, invest in expanded charging infrastructure and ban the sale of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles by 2030.

Does that make sense?

George Hoberg, a political scientist from the University of British Columbia, who focuses on environmental policy, said the Greens' plan is "unquestionably the most ambitious of the party platforms."

"It will really push the envelope in terms of feasibility," he said, explaining that it will be challenging for Alberta and the country as a whole to shift away from oilsands production as quickly as they're proposing.

Leach, the Alberta-based environmental economist, questioned whether the federal government would be able to effectively buffer the impact of "dislocating the major industry" in a couple provinces over such a short period of time.

But Burch said the Greens do a better job than the other parties of highlighting the potential co-benefits of job creation in new industries and sectors that could come alongside a transition to a low-carbon economy.

The plan, she added, is more in line with the level of action scientists say is required to avoid the worst effects of climate change. But it would require "monumental collaboration" between the federal and provincial governments.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: COLUMN

Publication-Type: NEWSPAPER

Subject: ELECTIONS & POLITICS (91%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (90%); CLIMATE ACTION (90%); CLIMATE CHANGE (90%); ELECTIONS (90%); EMISSIONS (90%); ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENTS (90%); GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (90%); POLITICAL PARTIES (90%); US POLITICAL PARTIES (90%); AIR QUALITY REGULATION (89%); ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (89%); GREENHOUSE GASES (89%); VEHICLE EMISSIONS (89%); CLIMATE CHANGE REGULATION & POLICY (79%); ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION & POLICY (79%); GLOBAL WARMING (79%); AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT (78%); ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES (78%); GOVERNMENT ADVISORS & MINISTERS (78%); SUSTAINABILITY (78%); DELAYS & POSTPONEMENTS (77%); ENERGY & UTILITY POLICY (77%); OIL & GAS REGULATION & POLICY (77%); SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (77%); POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS (76%); POLITICS (76%); UNITED NATIONS (75%); SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION (71%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (70%); FUEL TAX (68%); REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (68%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (60%)

Industry: EMISSIONS (90%); ENERGY & UTILITIES (90%); VEHICLE EMISSIONS (89%); GLOBAL WARMING (79%); METHANE (79%); ALTERNATIVE & RENEWABLE ENERGY (78%); AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT (78%); ELECTRIC POWER PLANTS (77%); ENERGY & UTILITY POLICY (77%); NATURAL GAS (77%); NATURAL GAS & ELECTRIC UTILITIES (77%); OIL & GAS REGULATION & POLICY (77%); SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (77%); OIL & GAS INDUSTRY (73%); FOSSIL FUEL POWER PLANTS (71%);

How climate fight plans compare; Alarm bells are ringing about the warming world. In Canada, where it is federal election season, major political parties are tr....

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION (71%); FUEL TAX (68%); ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION (66%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (60%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, USA (79%); NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA (57%); CANADA (96%)

Load-Date: September 20, 2019

End of Document